

Cleveland Municipal Dump and Burke Lakefront Airport CERCLIS FOIA Request

In 1987, the Ohio EPA notified the City of Cleveland that it had completed a “preliminary assessment” of the former Cleveland Municipal Dump, located in the City along the shore of Lake Erie from the mouth of the Cuyahoga River to East 55 Street, approximately a 4-mile distance. This area includes part of Burke Lakefront Airport.

The “preliminary assessment” was conducted as part of Ohio EPA’s process to identify and remedy hazardous materials problems in Ohio. Ohio EPA was at that time “screening” or doing a preliminary assessment of over 800 sites in the State that were included on the U.S. EPA’s Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Information System (CERCLIS) list of more than 22,000 sites nationwide. The purpose of the screening was to prioritize sites for additional investigation under the National Contingency Plan (40 CFR Part 300). Particularly bad sites could end up on the Superfund Sites list.

The Cleveland Municipal Dump site, including Burke Airport, was on the Federal government’s CERCLIS list. However, the Ohio EPA found that the area of the Dump “poses a low threat for groundwater contamination (‘silts and clays yield little water’) and for surface water contamination (‘previous dumping of debris encroached the Lake Erie shoreline’)” and recommended a low priority for State and Federal activities.¹⁸ This meant that the area would not be considered by the U.S. EPA for remedial action. The Ohio EPA concluded that they could not find evidence of any hazardous material ever being disposed of at this location, and that most of the material was construction and demolition debris, mixed with some garbage. They found that the dump closed in the 1940s.